

BETWEEN THE LINES

Singlaub Recruits His Own Army in the Philippines



by Doug Cunningham

Since October, 1986, retired General John Singlaub has spent much of his time in the Philippines, and has now set up an office in Manila. He claims that he is there only to hunt for treasure left by Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita after World War II, but a growing body of evidence suggests that he may also be involved in advising or assisting in the development of counter-insurgency plans and capabilities and in the development of right-wing, anti-communist organizations.

While stationed in Vietnam from 1966-68, Singlaub was one of the on-site commanders of Operation Phoenix, a program responsible for the assassination of some 20,000 Vietnamese civilians. Presently he is chairman of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) and is extensively involved in fund-raising for the contras.

Singlaub set up an office at 2298 Pasong Tamo extension, Manila, in offices of the Nippon Star Company. Nippon Star is a subsidiary of Nippon Electric Company which supplies materials for telecommunications projects in Ilocos and Cagayan, the provinces of Ferdinand Marcos and Juan Ponce Enrile respectively. A "Restricted Area" sign guards the office. Enrile told reporters that he met with Singlaub three times in 1986. He refused to answer when asked if he believed that Singlaub was in the Philippines on a treasure hunt.

Particular concern was expressed in the Manila press over reports that he was joined in his meetings by former CIA deputy chief Ray Cline and CIA Philippine station chief Norbert Garrett. According to

a *San Francisco Examiner* report, Singlaub has been "using Enrile's introduction" to meet officers associated with the pro-Enrile Reform of the Armed Forces Movement (RAM). One senior officer said Singlaub was engaged in "arms trading" and was offering to "sell equipment useful in counter-insurgency operations." A former Western military officer familiar with arms trading in the Philippines said Singlaub tried to sell M-16 automatic rifles and communications equipment on the local black market.

Another senior military officer said the Philippine military was developing a right-wing vigilante movement in the countryside. The *Manila Chronicle* reports that Singlaub has offered financial support to sugar planters on the island of Negros who are mounting an "anti-communist drive" and that "people close to Singlaub" have also offered weapons and logistical support to "vigilante-type organizations linked to the Marcos loyalists."

Singlaub has met with a number of conservative Philippine politicians including Homobono Adaza, Roilo Golez, and Eva Estrada Kalaw. Ms. Kalaw, a former senator who intends to run again this year, is vice-president of the Philippine Anti-Communist Movement, the Philippine chapter of WACL. One meeting was at a January 26, 1987 dinner party hosted by General Luis Villa-Real, head of the National Intelligence Coordinating Authority and president of the Philippine WACL chapter. Villa-Real has been instrumental in the development of right wing paramilitary groups such as the "Alsa Masa" (Rising Masses) which has been terrorizing Agdao, Davao City.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Washington Post* reported on February 15 that Singlaub "has recruited at least 37 Americans, Asians and other nationals who served with the U.S. Special Forces in Vietnam to train [Philippine] soldiers . . . in unconventional warfare techniques," according to an "official familiar with U.S. and Philippine military affairs . . . who has close contact with intelligence agents monitoring Singlaub's activities."

Singlaub denied that he is recruiting mercenaries saying, "I know nothing about any American mercenaries coming to the

Philippines. . . . It's a total fabrication, the idea that I'm involved in any training activity." He suggested that the reports were "orchestrated by the KGB." General Singlaub did admit that he had hired six Americans but said that "most of them are not veterans."

The Tower Commission report shows that Singlaub's contra fund-raising activities were coordinated with Oliver North and Richard Secord, both of whom are under investigation for their role in Iran weapons deals. Secord and North were associates of Singlaub in Vietnam. Another possible link between Singlaub and Iran is his relationship with Ramon Moreno, a Filipino military contractor who is currently under investigation by a U.S. grand jury for alleged corruption in awarding Armed Forces of the Philippines military contracts to a California firm which Moreno controls. Moreno, a friend of Singlaub's, owns the building where Singlaub has his office.

Moreno is also a close associate of General Fabian Ver, Philippine military Chief of Staff under Marcos. A December 10 *San Francisco Examiner* report ties Ver to the Iran arms deals by the fact that Ver "provided fake resale certificates to an Israeli arms dealer in an apparent effort to keep Secretary of State Shultz from discovering U.S. weapons were going to Iran." An unidentified Filipino arms dealer reportedly close to Ver received a five percent commission from the Iranian arms sales proceeds for providing the certificates. U.S. Attorney Theodore Greenberg, who is investigating the Moreno case, is seeking these documents.

General Singlaub served as an officer in the OSS during World War II both in Europe and in China. In 1946 he became the chief of the U.S. military liaison mission to Mukden, Manchuria, and in 1949 he became the China Desk officer for the CIA. After helping to establish the Ranger Training Center at Fort Benning, Georgia, he was assigned to South Korea during the Korean War as CIA deputy chief. He remains a close associate of former CIA director William Colby, who headed the Phoenix Program in his role as director of the U.S. CORDS mission in Vietnam. Later Singlaub was commander of the U.N. forces in South Korea. In 1978 he retired from the military after disagreeing with President Carter's decision to reduce the number of U.S. troops there. □